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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SOFIA 000515

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR BULGARIAN DEPUTY PM'S VISIT TO
WASHINGTON

REF: A. SOFIA 499

[1](#)B. SOFIA 450

[1](#)C. SOFIA 420

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires John Ordway for reasons 1.4 (b)/(d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Tsvetan Tsvetanov will be in Washington from September 23 to 29 for rule of law discussions with senior U.S. officials and experts. Tsvetanov will be accompanied by the Justice Minister, Chief Prosecutor, head of the Anti-Organized Crime police unit and the director of Bulgaria's national security agency (DANS). This will be the new center-right GERB government's largest and highest-level visit to the United States since winning national elections in July on an anti-organized crime and corruption platform. The government is eager to showcase Bulgaria's law enforcement cooperation with the U.S., and it seeks our approval for its recent reform efforts. The political will for change in Bulgaria is real, and the government is looking to us for support and advice. This visit of five of Bulgaria's most influential decision makers is an opportunity to ensure Bulgaria's reforms move in line with our recommendations and that momentum is not lost on the areas of greatest interest to the United States. END SUMMARY.

POLICY AGENDA

[1](#)2. (C) Following the July elections, the embassy offered four sets of policy recommendations to the new ministers to address the most urgent and highest impact areas of reform. These proposals and their implementation challenges will be the basis for many of the delegation's discussions in Washington. (The specifics of these recommendations will be passed in advance to all offices the delegation will meet.)

- Institution of interagency organized crime task forces with vetted, interagency teams focused solely on tackling complicated, high-level organized crime and corruption cases.

- Renewed efforts against money laundering and terrorist finance by establishing reporting requirements for cash withdrawals and re-incorporation of the Financial Intelligence Directorate into the Ministry of Finance.

- Creation of specialized court divisions of specially trained and vetted judges to hear important organized crime and corruption cases.

- Measures to strengthen the government's power to seize assets involved in organized crime and corruption cases.

[1](#)3. (C) The Bulgarian government has responded positively to

all four recommendations and has already signed an interagency agreement to implement the first. Moreover, it went a step further by adopting a 57-point action plan incorporating three of these recommendations as well as other long-standing embassy and European Commission suggestions. (The money laundering point will be addressed in separate legislation dealing with the restructuring of DANS and was therefore not included in the action plan.) Each of the action items has a target result and a clear deadline for implementation. The government has said it will attempt to complete all 57 measures before the end of the year and is prepared to be judged by its success or failure to do so.

¶4. (C) In addition to reform efforts, the new government has more actively pursued high-level corruption cases than any of its predecessors. In the week of September 7 - 11, charges were brought against the former minister of agriculture, the former head of the forestry agency and the executive director of a state-owned defense firm. The Chief Prosecutor has said publicly that investigations of several other former ministers are ongoing.

SCHEDULED MEETINGS

¶5. (C) At the State Department, the delegation will meet with INL Assistant Secretary Johnson and EUR DAS Quanrud. Other meetings include Attorney General Holder, FBI Deputy Director Pistole, Secret Service Director Sullivan, DEA Administrator Leonhart and the Director of the Administrative Office of U.S. Courts. Tsvetanov and DANS Chairman Yovchev will also meet with CIA Director Panetta. The delegation

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will spend a day at both FBI and DOJ headquarters in issue-specific, expert-level meetings.

¶6. (C) Comment: Bulgaria is a valuable security partner in a strategic location with a new government eager to deepen cooperation with the United States across the board. To date, its economic development and its capacity as a military, law enforcement and energy security partner has been critically limited by endemic corruption and a culture of impunity with respect to organized crime. Benefiting in the early days of its new administration from high approval ratings and a clear mandate for change, the current government has an unprecedented opportunity to move forward with the most dramatic judicial and law enforcement reforms in decades. The government has a sharp, pro-U.S. team in place with clear political backing from the Prime Minister. This high-level visit is an ideal opportunity to focus the government on our four-point rule of law agenda and to coordinate a targeted U.S. assistance plan to help sustain the momentum for reform.

ORDWAY